

Despite PR stunts, Europe remains knowingly complicit in the Gaza genocide



European Parliament members attend the last session before the upcoming European elections, Thursday April 25, 2024 at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France. (AP Photo/Jean-Francois Badias)



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Israel-Palestinian Territory



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Geneva - The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor expresses its grave alarm over the persistent failure of the European Union, its member states, and the United Kingdom to take effective measures in

response to Israel's atrocities in the Gaza Strip.

Despite repeated public statements and internal assessments acknowledging clear violations of international law, these governments continue, through acts and omissions alike, to exercise active and knowing complicity in the unfolding genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. This complicity not only grants Israel the licence to pursue its genocidal campaign with impunity, but also renders these states morally and legally responsible for the catastrophic consequences of their breach of international obligations, thereby aiding and abetting international crimes.

Over the past twelve months, the European Union has conducted three formal assessments of Israel's compliance with the "essential elements" human rights clause in Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. While the language differs across the reviews, all three reportedly point to serious concerns regarding Israel's compliance with its human rights obligations under the Agreement.

Despite these findings, the European Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament have failed to activate any corrective mechanisms provided for in the EU-Israel Association Agreement, such as

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suspending trade preferences, freezing cooperation instruments, or initiating dispute-settlement procedures.

The continued application of this agreement—along with the preferential treatment granted to Israel and the preservation of institutional cooperation in areas such as trade, scientific research, culture, and education, despite

well-documented evidence of grave crimes—means that European states are not merely undermining their own legal framework, including the human rights clause enshrined in the agreement. They are going further, providing Israel with political legitimacy and material support that enables it to continue its attacks on Palestinian civilians with impunity.

This approach—combining the failure to impose consequences with the ongoing maintenance of political and economic relations—constitutes far more than a political or moral failure. It amounts to a deliberate abdication of the European Union's binding obligations under international law, including the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the rules of customary

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international law, including those on state responsibility, as well as the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, and Articles 3(5) and 21 of the Treaty on European Union.

This legal and institutional complicity is further deepened by the hypocrisy of European states that issue statements condemning “disproportionate” Israeli attacks, while simultaneously supplying arms, transferring surveillance and military technologies, and providing direct military and intelligence support. This constitutes not principled diplomacy, but performative posturing—an approach that deflects responsibility while materially enabling the machinery of atrocity. Such conduct directly undermines the international legal order and reinforces the conditions of impunity under which grave crimes continue to be committed.

This pattern is further illustrated by the recent sanctions announced by the United Kingdom, Norway, and others against two Israeli ministers. These measures—limited in scope and purely symbolic—target only inflammatory rhetoric, and only with respect to the occupied West Bank. They deliberately exclude any reference to Gaza, effectively shielding those most responsible for the unfolding genocide in the Strip.

To date, no European punitive measure has addressed Israel’s conduct in Gaza. This silence is not an oversight—it is a calculated decision. And it is not neutral—it is complicity. By prioritising political alliances and economic interests over their clear obligations under international law, European

governments are not simply standing by—they are actively enabling and legitimising Israel's criminal campaign. In doing so, they are not only complicit in atrocity crimes but are directly undermining the very foundations of the international legal order they claim to defend.

As Israel's largest trading partner, second-largest arms supplier, and a key enabler of its access to global markets, finance, and mobility, Europe holds immense leverage—yet it chooses not to use it. Measures that are readily available include imposing a comprehensive arms embargo; enacting targeted sanctions against officials and entities responsible for the genocide; suspending the EU–Israel Association Agreement; blacklisting financial institutions complicit in international crimes; banning products from illegal settlements; revoking Schengen visa privileges; and recognising the State of Palestine. The fact that these tools remain unused is not a matter of capacity—it is a failure of political will, legal integrity, and moral courage.

Concerning the obligation of accountability, the EU must actively support the International Criminal Court's efforts to prosecute Israeli officials responsible for atrocity crimes in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territory. This includes ensuring the prompt issuance and execution of arrest warrants and rejecting all political interference aimed at protecting perpetrators. In parallel, EU member states must initiate domestic investigations, including against their own nationals implicated in such crimes, and activate universal jurisdiction to prosecute Israeli officials responsible

for crimes against the Palestinian people, in line with their obligations under international law.

The EU must uphold its legal obligations under international law and use all its influence to halt Israel's crimes and protect Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Specifically, the EU must act without delay to exert effective pressure on Israel through the imposition of economic, diplomatic, and military sanctions to end its illegal presence in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), including the Gaza Strip; to halt all military assaults; to lift the blockade; and to ensure the immediate and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as the unconditional reconstruction of life-saving infrastructure and housing.

Ireland has already begun to demonstrate what principled leadership looks like. Its decision to intervene in South Africa's genocide case before the International Court of Justice and its formal recognition of the State of Palestine are concrete steps that reflect a willingness to uphold international law where others have chosen silence. Other European governments must follow suit by joining the ICJ case, requesting provisional measures addressing Israel's use of starvation as a genocide weapon in Gaza, and ending their practice of shielding Israeli officials from accountability.

Finally, EU member states and the United Kingdom must move beyond treating symptoms and act urgently to confront the root causes of the 77-year-long oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian

people. This requires ending the illegal Israeli occupation and dismantling the system of settler colonialism imposed across the occupied Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip. It entails the full evacuation of Israeli settlers, the dismantling of apartheid structures and territorial fragmentation, and the enforcement of the right of return and just compensation for all Palestinian refugees. It also calls for unwavering and sustained support for the Palestinian people's pursuit of liberation and the realisation of their full right to self-determination. Justice cannot be deferred any longer. The harm must be acknowledged and redressed, so that the Palestinian people may finally live in freedom, dignity, and peace.



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